

Support the just struggle of the Electricity workers!

Privatisation of Electricity is against the interests of society!

Statement of Mazdoor Ekta Committee, November 23, 2022

Electricity workers have gathered in large numbers at Ram Lila Maidan in Delhi, to oppose the Electricity Amendment Bill 2022. Workers of many other sectors have also come here to extend their support to the struggle. The struggle of the electricity workers is an important component of the struggle against privatisation, that is raging all over the country.

Mazdoor Ekta Committee (MEC) fully supports the struggle of the electricity workers. Your united struggle is an important step in defending the interests of society. Mazdoor Ekta Committee salutes your courage and determination in the struggle.

Access to electric supply is an essential need of all human beings in this day and age. It is a universal right. Hence it is the duty of the State to ensure adequate and reliable supply of electricity at affordable rates to all. Earning private profit cannot be the objective of producing and distributing this basic necessity. Privatisation of electric supply amounts to the abrogation of duty by the State. It is a violation of the fundamental right of all households to have access to reliable electric supply at affordable rates.

Through their united opposition, the electricity workers all over the country have successfully foiled the plans of the central and state governments to hand over the distribution of electricity to private hands.

Your bold actions in Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Puducherry, Uttar Pradesh,

Chandigarh, etc. are all a testimony to the struggle you have waged in preventing the privatisation of electricity distribution. As a result of your struggle, the central government has been unsuccessful in its repeated attempts at getting the Electricity Amendment Bill passed in parliament – in 2014, 2018, 2020 and 2021. Once again, in the monsoon session of parliament this year, the bill could not be passed and has been sent to a standing committee of parliament for further consideration.

The privatisation program began in the 1990s in the sphere of power generation. Long-term power purchase agreements were signed by the authorities with various private companies, Indian and foreign. It led to huge private profits for the monopoly capitalists who invested in power generation. It led to a large increase in the price that state electricity boards had to pay for power. This in turn led to a steep rise in the rates which farmers and urban workers had to pay for electric power.

The spokesmen of the Central Government and various bourgeois economists claim that privatisation of electricity distribution will give customers the freedom to choose between different companies. They claim that it will bring in healthy competition, which will lead to more efficient and reliable power supply at affordable rates.

The experience with electricity distribution privatisation so far does not support the claims of its proponents. Mumbai city, for instance, has two private companies and one public

company supplying electric power; and power rates in the city are one of the highest in the country. In Delhi, different zones are under the control of two different companies, owned by the Tata and Reliance monopoly houses. Individual households do not have any choice whatsoever. They are at the mercy of one private monopoly or the other.

The monopoly corporate houses want to secure their monopoly control over this vital resource of society, in order to make maximum profits. The Electricity Amendment Bill aims to create the opportunity for private companies to enjoy high profit rates with low risk, without the need to advance their own capital to invest in infrastructure. The huge network built with public funds, which are under the control of the state electricity boards, will be made available to the big capitalists, practically for free.

The electricity workers' unions have repeatedly pointed out that this Bill is designed to serve the interests of private companies, at the expense of workers, peasants and other low-income consumers.

Opposition to the Electricity Amendment Bill has been a key issue in the struggle of kisans all over the country. Kisan unions have joined hands with the workers' unions to oppose the Electricity Amendment Bill. They realise that electric power for running their water pumps will become very expensive.

Workers of state electricity boards have carried out several awareness campaigns, to educate urban households about the harmful effects that privatisation of both power generation and distribution will have on them. As a result of your tireless efforts, today lakhs of workers and kisans all over the country are coming out in support of your struggle.

Since the 1990s, every government at the centre and in the states has been implementing the program of privatisation. Many basic public sector enterprises and services have been consciously and deliberately wrecked and declared "loss-making" in order to justify their privatisation. Railways, banking, insurance, MTNL, BSNL, road and air transport, education and health services, all these are being pushed towards privatisation in this manner. In the same manner, the central and state governments have deliberately ruined the state electricity boards and government distribution companies financially, so that they can be handed over at a pittance, to the monopoly capitalist companies.

The fight against privatisation is a fight of workers, kisans and other toiling people against the bourgeoisie, headed by the monopoly houses. The struggle has to be waged with the perspective of liberating society from being dominated by the greed of profit hungry monopoly capitalists. This requires the working class to take political power in its hands, socialise the ownership of the means of large-scale production and reorient the economy towards fulfilling all essential needs of dignified human life of all members of society.

Mazdoor Ekta Committee supports the just demands of the electricity workers – to withdraw the Electricity Amendment Bill 2022 and stop all attempts at privatisation in the electricity sector; to regularise the contract workers; to restore the old pension scheme, etc. We congratulate you for this successful protest action.

Withdraw the Electricity Amendment Bill 2022!

Support the just struggle of the Electricity workers!

Long live the unity of workers, kisans and all toilers!

Inquilab Zindabad!

Mazdoor Ekta Committee

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